

QUOTING LITERATURE

When you quote literature, you must cite your sources – provide documentation for your source so that readers can find the quotations and material cited. We will be using parenthetical citation. Rules and examples follow.

(adapted from *The Keables Guide*)

1. documentation. Place the page or line number in a parenthesis after the quotation:

Jane Eyre speaks to her master boldly: "You are human and fallible" (129).

a. Never misquote the text. Check quotations for details, even punctuation.

b. Use correct form. End punctuation goes outside the parenthesis. Use no abbreviations such as p. or pp. Leave one blank space between the quotation marks and the parenthesis:

WRONG: "fallible." (129) "fallible" (p. 129) "fallible (129)". "fallible"(129).

RIGHT: "fallible" (129).

Sentences ending in question marks or exclamation points are exceptions:

An inner voice urges Jane, "Depart!" (300).

c. Two or more consecutive quotations from the same page need only one citation:

REDUNDANT: Karenin feels both a "good spiritual force" (382) and a "coarse power" (382).

BETTER: Karenin feels both a "good spiritual force" and a "coarse power" (382).

d. Identify different editions. If you use a different edition than the rest of the class, page numbers will probably differ; identify your edition briefly in the first citation: (Penguin edition 342). Do not repeat the name of the edition in subsequent citations.

2. enumeration. In a range of numbers, only the last two digits should repeat:

WRONG: 57-8 RIGHT: 57-58 WRONG: 127-131 RIGHT: 127-31

There are obvious exceptions to the rule: 299-301. In giving a range of years, write both in full unless they are in the same century: 1558-1603, 1608-74.

a. Poetry. Short poems (under 100 lines) need no citation, since readers can find the quoted lines at a glance. To quote longer poems (100 lines or more), cite line numbers, which stay the same from edition to edition, not page numbers, which vary. Example:

The Wedding Guest becomes "A sadder and a wiser man" (624).

If lines are not numbered, cite pages. Some long poems have separately numbered divisions, such as cantos or books. Book 9, line 781 of *Paradise Lost* can be cited (9.781) or (IX.781).

b. Drama. Cite page numbers for drama. For plays like Shakespeare's, written largely in poetry and divided into acts and scenes, indicate act, scene and line numbers, respectively:

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Hamlet debates whether "To be or not to be" (3.1.56).

Periods with no spacing follow act and scene numbers. If you are typing a citation near the right margin, you may divide it after either period. The traditional form of citation, seldom used nowadays, indicates acts with capital Roman numerals, scenes with lower case Roman numerals, and lines with Arabic numerals: (III.i.56).

3. extracted quotations. If a prose quotation takes more than four lines, or a quotation from poetry takes more than three, indent one inch, using double-spacing and no quotation marks. Indent from the left only. Do not indent more for the start of a paragraph unless your quotation covers more than one paragraph; if it does, indent paragraph beginnings three tenths of an inch.

Extracted quotations from poetry have additional rules; see section 4 below. Use extracted quotations sparingly. Parenthetical citation for extracted quotations goes *after* the period and one blank space. The following example is spaced and indented as it would appear in an essay:

Baldwin uses a metaphor to describe the narrator's reaction to the shocking news:

A great block of ice got settled in my belly and kept melting there slowly all day long, while I taught my classes algebra. It was a special kind of ice. It kept melting, sending trickles of ice water all up and down my veins, but it never got less. Sometimes it hardened and seemed to expand until I felt my guts were going to come spilling out or that I was going to choke or scream. (272)

4. quoting poetry

a. Quotations up to three lines long. Reproduce capitalization and punctuation as they appear in the poem (often the first word of each line is capitalized). Use a slash, with one blank space before and after, to mark each line break:

Macbeth now sees life as a mere "tale / Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, / Signifying nothing" (5.5.26-28).

b. Quotations longer than three lines. Use extracted quotations (see [QL3](#)). Use no slashes. Copy indentation as closely as possible. Many poems are indented according to their pattern of rhyme and meter. With modern free verse which follows no consistent rule of indentation, just imitate the way the poem looks in print. If lines are very long, you may use a margin of less than one inch. If only one or two lines are too long, run them over into the next lines, indenting half an inch beyond the widest indentation. The following example is spaced and indented as it would appear in an essay:

Scoffing at the story he has heard, Theseus compares love to madness:

I never may believe
These antique fables, nor these fairy toys.
Lovers and madmen have such seething brains,
Such shaping fantasies, that apprehend
More than cool reason ever comprehends. (5.1.2-6)

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Note: (A) Parenthetical citation for extracted quotations goes after the period and one blank space. (B) The first line has extra indentation because the quotation begins in the middle of a line; in such a case, indent enough to make the line end near where the other lines end.

5. omissions from quotations. An ellipsis (the plural, *ellipses*, rhymes with *Gypsies*) marks omissions from a quotation. College style manuals now recommend using brackets around an ellipsis in a quotation, to make it clear that the ellipsis is not in the original text you are quoting. Ellipses and brackets make your page ugly; use them only when there is no better alternative.

a. One space goes before and after each period:

WRONG: "Time's [...] chariot."

WRONG: "Time's. . .chariot."

RIGHT: "Time's [. . .] chariot."

b. Never divide an ellipsis between lines. All the periods should either end one line or begin the next line.

c. Use ellipses only to omit the middle of a sentence, not the beginning or end:

Mocking the romantic exaggerations of lovers, Rosalind scoffs, "Men have died from time to time, [. . .] but not for love" (4.1.101-02).

d. No ellipsis is needed to quote a short, uninterrupted phrase:

WRONG: Mrs. Turpin is shocked when the girl calls her an "[. . .] old wart hog [. . .]" (372).

RIGHT: Mrs. Turpin is shocked when the girl calls her an "old wart hog" (372).

e. If you omit the end of a sentence but continue your quotation, use four periods, with no space before the first. Otherwise you need no ellipsis if you omit the start or end of a sentence:

Johnson satirizes chronic idlers: "Some are always in a state of preparation[. . . .] These are certainly under the secret power of Idleness" (191).

f. In extracted quotations from poetry, an entire line of spaced periods is used to mark the omission of one or more lines. Such omissions look awkward and should be avoided, either by quoting the entire passage, or by using two separate quotations.

6. other changes in quotations.

a. Closing punctuation. The closing punctuation of a quotation may be altered to suit the structure of your sentence. Although William Wordsworth's line "Where is it now, the glory and the dream?" (58) ends in a question mark, you have many options:

PERIOD: Wordsworth no longer sees "the glory and the dream" (58).

COMMA: He no longer sees "the glory and the dream" (58), for he has lost his innocence.

NO PUNCTUATION: He no longer sees "the glory and the dream" (58) of his boyhood days.

QUESTION MARK: Why does he no longer see "the glory and the dream" (58)?

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b. Brackets. Use brackets to set off changes within a quotation. You may need to clarify the reference of a pronoun or add a word to fit a quotation into your sentence:

Suspicious, Polonius warns his daughter, "Do not believe his [Hamlet's] vows" (1.3.127). For Robert Frost, the "Two roads [that] diverged in a yellow wood" are symbolic.

Avoid brackets; they are intrusive and ugly. Find a better alternative:

UGLY: Emily Dickinson paradoxically claims, "I [she] taste[s] a liquor never brewed."

BETTER: Emily Dickinson paradoxically claims to "taste a liquor never brewed."

c. Emphasis added. A brief explanation in a parenthesis should be added if you italicize or underline part of a quotation for emphasis:

The diction of Conrad's opening sentence introduces the idea of uncertainty and ambiguity: "On my right hand there were lines of fishing-stakes resembling a *mysterious* system of *half-submerged* bamboo fences, *incomprehensible* in its division of the domain of tropical fishes, and *crazy* of aspect . . ." (19, emphasis added).

d. Sic. Use *sic* (Latin for "thus" or "so") in a parenthesis (or in brackets if it is within the quotation) to assure readers that a quotation is accurate although it contains an error:

When her poems were reviewed unfavorably, Julia Moore wrote in reply, "The Editors that has spoken in a scandalous manner, have went beyond reason" (*sic*).

7. introducing quotations. There are two critically important rules:

a. Introduce every quotation smoothly and grammatically into a statement of your own. Do not leave the quotation hanging with no introduction, and do not violate the rules of grammar to include the quotation. The second example below is a fused sentence.

WRONG (NO INTRODUCTION): Macbeth has changed. "Out, out, brief candle!" (5.5.23).

WRONG (UNGRAMMATICAL): Macbeth has changed "Out, out, brief candle!" (5.5.23).

RIGHT: A changed man, Macbeth wearily exclaims, "Out, out, brief candle!" (5.5.23).

b. Your sentence must comment on the significance of the quotation. Do not just introduce your evidence. Just as an attorney shows a jury a forged check or murder weapon, a literary critic shows the reader evidence--a word, a series of phrases, a paragraph--to prove a point about character, theme or style. As you quote, clearly indicate the context of the passage and the purpose it serves in your argument. Your sentence should include commentary:

WRONG (NO COMMENTARY): Macbeth says, "Out, out, brief candle!" (5.5.23).

RIGHT: Upon hearing that his wife has died, Macbeth can only cry, "Out, out, brief candle!" (5.5.23), for life now seems to him no more than a flame that quickly vanishes.

8. vary your handling of quotations. Do not introduce all quotations in the same way. Aim at a variety of sentence patterns and punctuation (QL9), and a balance of short (one- or two-word), medium and long quotations. Do not rely on the mechanical "this shows that" pattern:

WEAK: Emily's cane has "a tarnished gold head" (27). *This shows that* her glory has faded.

WEAK: Emily's cane has "a tarnished gold head" (27), *symbolizing that* her glory has faded.

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There are many ways to connect evidence to commentary without relying on "this shows that":

SMOOTH: The "tarnished gold head" (27) on Emily's cane is a symbol of faded glory.

SMOOTH: Like the "tarnished gold head" (27) on her cane, Emily has lost her glow.

SMOOTH: On Emily's cane is a symbol of her own faded glory: "a tarnished gold head" (27).

9. punctuation with quotations. Quotations can be introduced in three main ways, although many students stop after learning the first way:

a. a comma is used in narrative to introduce dialogue. It follows verbs like *say*, *tell*, *whisper*, *claim* and *demand* ("He *cried*, 'No!'"). In literary criticism, it is used similarly, whether the quotation comes before or after the verb:

Upon learning his wife has died, Macbeth says, "Out, out, brief candle!" (5.5.23).

"Out, out, brief candle!" (5.5.23), says Macbeth, upon learning his wife has died.

Good writers would find a better verb than the dull says in this sentence--perhaps *laments*.

b. a colon, more formal than a comma, does not require a word like *say*. A colon can work in two ways. It acts as an arrow drawing attention to what follows it:

Macbeth wearily mocks the value of life: "Out, out brief candle!" (5.5.23).

It can also act as an "equals" sign: a mark that something before and after it are equivalent. In the examples below, the italicized phrases are equivalent to the quotations:

Macbeth reacts *with an expression of despair*: "Out, out, brief candle!" (5.5.23).

Various metaphors for life reveal Macbeth's despair: "brief candle," "walking shadow," "poor player," and "a tale / Told by an idiot" (5.5.23-27).

Colons are usually the best method for introducing longer, extracted quotations. For more information, see the section on the colon (Col) in Part Four.

c. no punctuation. A quotation can be introduced with no punctuation, as long as it fits smoothly into your sentence. This method is best for two purposes:

1. Introducing a phrase rather than a complete sentence:

Grown fatalistic, he sees life as mere "sound and fury / Signifying nothing" (5.5.27-28).

2. Introducing a sentence with "that":

Grown fatalistic, he now believes that "Life's but a walking shadow" (5.5.24).

This method does not work if the quotation includes a first- or second-person pronoun. To avoid the shift from third person to first ("he realizes that I"), rephrase the sentence:

WRONG: Grown heartless, *he* realizes that "I have almost forgot the taste of tears" (5.5.9).

RIGHT: Grown heartless, he realizes that he has "almost forgot the taste of tears" (5.5.9).

RIGHT: Grown hard-hearted, he realizes, "I have almost forgot the taste of tears" (5.5.9).

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